Unity and Peace:

OR, THE

DUTY

OF THE

PEOPLE

In Respect of

COMMUNION

WITH OUR

CHURCH.

Delivered in Two

SERMONS

At St. *Steven's Coleman-street.*

By *Richard Lucas*, Vicar of that Church.

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To my very kind Friends and Parishioners of St. *Steven's Coleman-street.*

I *Present you here those two Discourses which your Importunity prevailed with me to Publish: I pray God they may do that Good which you expect, and I sincerely design by them. However they succeed in the World, I beg of you that you would accept of my Endeavours herein, as a discharge of a part of my Duty, and an Acknowledgment of your Kindness to me; for besides that of my Office, as your Minister, I lye under many Obligations to you, which your Affection, Respect, and Bounty have laid upon me. One thing I should be ungrateful if I should forget or conceal, your Be-*

haviour to me in my preſent ſtate has been, and is ſuch, that my Affliction ſeems rather to have increaſed than leſſened your Eſteem and Paſſion for me, which as it is my great Satisfaction, ſo it is, and ſhall be to Poſterity your Glory. For there is nothing wherein Man does more nearly approach and reſemble God, than in being a Patron and Friend to the Afflicted.

Your Affectionate Miniſter, and Heartily Deſirous of your Temporal and Eternal Happineſs.

R. L.

Unity

Unity and Peace Preſerv'd by Communion with our CHURCH.

Epheſ. 4. Ver. 2, 3.

With all Lowlineſs and Meekneſs, with Long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love. Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.

WHEN I haſten'd laſt day to a Concluſion of my former Subject, I did it with Deſign to Treat of the Great Myſtery of our Religion, *Chriſt made manifeſt in the Fleſh*, in this time of *Advent*; but contrary to my purpoſe, I am forc'd to turn the point of my Diſcourſe another way, being by the preſent Tranſactions of Affairs Neceſſarily and Unavoidably engag'd on a Subject very unpleaſant to me, and to all Sober and well-affected Men, our preſent Diviſions. You are not ignorant, I ſuppoſe, what Preſentment the Church-wardens have been Oblig'd to make, and you know as well as I, what the Method of the Law is towards thoſe who ſhall continue in their Separation from this Church. This, I know,

will raise a great Cry against the Government, but especially, the greatest share of Popular Odium and Invidious Reflection will light upon the Clergy. What are we to do in this Case? Shall we disobey the Lawful Commands of our Lawful Governours, to Humour a Discontented Party of the People? And to Humour them in that which we in our Consciences are perswaded is both hurtful to them themselves, and Destructive to the Peace and Prosperity of the Government: This cannot be expected from us, because we cannot do it with a good Conscience towards God, or towards Man. All that I can possibly imagine to be in our power, is both by Private and Publick Admonition to inform such of the error and danger of their ways, to exhort them to return to their Duty, and as much as lies in us, to perswade them *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*: This I am willing to do as far as I am able in private, and am now about to do in publick, though it is highly probable, that those whose good I chiefly design in it, may by their absenting themselves, make themselves incapable of this part of my Charity.

By the *Unity of the Spirit* here is meant that which we are wont to call the Unity of Charity and Affection. By *the bond of Peace*, is meant Unity and Agreement in our external Societies, whether more publick, or more private, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil, but especially Ecclesiastical, as appears by the Context; for by this Peace, preserved by Meekness and Long-suffering, *God is Glorified in the Church*; which is that St. *Paul* passionately desires, *Chap.* 3. *ver. ult.* And the enforcements of this Duty, *ver.* 4, 5, 6. of this Chapter, (a) *For there is one Body*, &c. do immediately relate to Ecclesiastical Union. You Observe here,

(a) *Clarius exprimit quàm perfecta esse debeat Unitas Christianorum, nempe quæ omni ex parte adeo valeat ut in unum Corpus & unam animam Coalesc. camus.* Calvin *in hunc locum.*

1. That

1. That the Unity of the Spirit cannot be preſerved but in the bond of Peace; that all Diviſions External, do Naturally tend to diſſolve the Unity of Charity and Affection: and I think, were there no other proof for Uniformity of a National Church in the New Teſtament, this were enough.

2. You may obſerve that it is the indiſpenſible Duty of all the Members of the Church of Chriſt, to endeavour *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

How great the Importance of this Duty, how neceſſary and indiſpenſible its obligation, no Man (I think) can be ignorant; unleſs he be a perfect Stranger to Chriſtianity. Both may ſufficiently appear from the verſes following my Text. *There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm; One God and Father of all; who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* In which words St. *Paul* does neceſſarily inſinuate, that whoever, does not endeavour to keep *the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace,* does Act repugnant to the very nature of Chriſtianity, and cuts himſelf off from that glorious and neceſſary Unity which he here explicates. This ſhould make us amazed to think, that Men ſhould ſet ſo light a Value upon our Peace and Unity; and upon ſuch ſlight, trifling, dark and diſputable pretences, throw off all obligations to this Duty; tho ſo clear, ſo important, ſo indiſpenſible. I am Aſtoniſhed to think that any Man profeſſing Chriſtianity, ſhould be tender and ſcrupulous in things of an indifferent Nature, and yet Confident and Careleſs in the Violation of a Duty neceſſary and eſſential to the life and being of Chriſtianity, and a Chriſtian Church.

But it is not my Deſign at preſent to inſiſt upon either of theſe two Obſervations, though of ſo great moment in themſelves, and ſo fairly and naturally deducible from the Text, I have only brought you on thus far, that from hence, as from a riſing ground, you may with more eaſe and advantage ſurvey each part of my following Diſcourſe, and I may more ſecurely make my entrance into it, the main Deſign of which is this. To conſider the Method by which we ought to preſerve *the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*, and to apply it to the preſent ſtate of things.

The Method is laid down, *ver.* 2. *With all Lowlineſs and Meekneſs, with Long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love.* Our preſent ſtate is this: There are many and great Diviſions amongſt us; the Government, as the beſt way to their Cure, or at leaſtwiſe, to give a ſtop and check to their growth, doth think fit that they ſhould by Summons, by Inſtructions, and by ſeveral ſorts of Admonition, be put in mind of their Error, invited, and required to amend it; and probably ſuch as perſiſt wilfully in their Diviſion, will fall under Eccleſiaſtical Cenſure, which, beſides the Spiritual diſadvantages of it, is followed by conſiderable Evils Inflicted by the Civil Power.

That in this ſtate of things I may diſcharge my ſelf with that Charity that I truly have for thoſe who have divided our Church, with that Obedience which I do out of Conſcience owe the Government, and with that Duty and Vigilance I owe my Cure, I will take the Liberty to conſider this Rule or Method of Unity.

1. With Reſpect to ſuch who are Actually in the ſtate of Diviſion or Separation.

2. With Reſpect to the Government, and thoſe who Act under it in this preſent Method.

3. With

3. With Reſpect to us our ſelves as private Perſons, that ſo they who err, may as far as lyes in me, be inform'd, that the Government, and they who Act under it, may not lye under the burden of Aſperſions, or any undeſerved Imputation: And that,

4. Laſtly, We in our particular Converſations may know how to behave our ſelves towards our Diſſenting Brethren.

1. Of this Rule, With Reſpect to thoſe who are Actually in Separation from us.

I ſuppoſe we may take it for granted, that this Rule of Lowlineſs, and Meekneſs, and Forbearance in Love does as ſtrongly Oblige the Subject and private Men towards their Governours, as it can the Magiſtrates and the Government towards their Inferiours and Subjects; how well this Duty has been diſcharged by theſe Men, will appear from three Conſiderations.

1. Whether thoſe grounds by which they pretend to juſtifie themſelves, be a juſt and neceſſary Cauſe of Diviſion.

2. Whether they have done all for the Nations and Churches Peace, which they themſelves acknowledge they Lawfully may do.

3. On ſuppoſal, that their pretences for Separation were both juſt and neceſſary, whether they have obſerved that Lowlineſs, and Meekneſs, and Forbearance, to which this Rule doth Oblige them, in the Forming, Propagating, and Defending their Separation.

1. Whether thoſe grounds, *&c.*

You will eaſily be able to judge of this, if I can make it appear, that there is no juſt ground of Separation from our Church, either upon the Account of its Doctrine, Government, or Rites.

1. Not

1. Not upon the Account of its Doctrine. The Articles of our Church are ſuch, in which moſt of thoſe that are divided from us do agree with us, excepting in thoſe which relate to the Government of the Church, (of which in its place) whatever be our difference in this point, in any Article wherein they differ from us, they do therein as widely differ from one another. But ſuppoſe the People would not approve of every Article of Doctrine contain'd in our Book of Articles, what Neceſſity is there that they ſhould? Are they bound to declare their aſſent to them by Oath or Subſcription? Or are any of them ever excluded our Communion for Diſſenting from theſe Articles in ſome one Opinion or other? What is there in any part of our Churches Liturgy, in which the People joyn in our Aſſemblies, beſides the three Creeds? And I do not know any of them, unleſs *Socinians* and *Quakers*, *&c.* which have renounc'd the Belief of theſe, if they have, we hope we ſhall be Pardoned by God and all the Reformed Churches, if we will not part with our Creed for the ſake of Unity: In a word, ſo well do we agree in the points of Doctrine, that it has been of late Diſputed with ſome heat, which kept cloſeſt to the ſenſe of our Articles, the Clergy of the Church of *England*, or thoſe of the Separation. We have no Anti-trinitarian Doctrines, which divided the Primitive Churches; we Teach no Infallibility, no Power of Indulgences, no Tranſubſtantiation, no Adoration of Images, Invocation of Saints, *&c.* which gave Occaſion, and that a juſt one, to the Modern Diviſions of the Reformed and *Roman* Churches; we *continue in the Apoſtles Doctrine and Fellowſhip, and in breaking of Bread, and Prayer*, Acts 2.42. As to the *Credenda* of our Articles, we *hold faſt the form of ſound words*, 2 Tim. 1.13. And as to the

the *Agenda*, we Teach thoſe things that become *ſound Doctrine*, *giving unto* Cæſar *the things that are* Cæſars, *and to God the things that are Gods*. We admit of nothing but Truth and Juſtice, Obedience and Charity, and will not allow of Equivocation or Perjury; or in a word, *the doing evil, that good may come thereof*: I think this is confeſs'd on all hands, and it is a matter of no ſmall moment, for it follows from hence,

1. That our Church is a true Church, for all of the Reformed Religion think nothing more Eſſentially neceſſary to a true Church than the Confeſſion of the true Faith, and right Adminiſtration of the Sacraments; and both theſe, I think, our Diſſenting Brethren will allow us, excepting Anabaptiſts, a Sect of no great Reputation through all Chriſtendom for many Years together, as every one knows, who has ſo much Hiſtory as to underſtand its Birth and Progreſs, and at this day Condemn'd with much bitterneſs by all other Profeſſions of Chriſtians.

2. It follows from hence that our Brethrens Separation from us is Condemn'd by all thoſe who deny Separation Lawful from that Church, where the Word of God is truly Preach'd, and the Sacraments rightly Adminiſtred, who upon ſearch may be found to be not only the Celebrated Authors of the Proteſtant Reformation, but the moſt Learned Divines of the Reformed Churches ever ſince.

3. It will from hence follow, that it is abſurd, and almoſt contradictious for thoſe who embrace our Doctrine, to charge us with Idolatrous and Superſtitious Rites, ſince 'tis ſo unlikely, that I cannot tell whether I may affirm it an utter impoſſibility, that that Church ſhould enjoyn in its Conſtitution Superſtition or Idolatry, which has no one Doctrine or Opinion favour-

ſavouring of either, but expreſly many, nay, all neceſſary to impugn and overthrow both; for beſides that, 'tis not likely that any Church ſhould impoſe Rites repugnant to its own Doctrine and Principles: So that if any ſuch were to be found amongſt us, it were to be charg'd on the Perſonal Corruptions of Men, not the Frame and Conſtitution of our Church: Beſides this, I ſay, 'twill puzzle a very ſubtle Schoolman to form a Notion of Superſtition and Idolatry in Practice without a Superſtitious or Idolatrous Opinion to Found it upon. And thus, I think, I have ſufficiently made it out, that the Doctrine of the Church of *England* is ſuch, both as to Matters of Faith and Practice, as can give no juſt cauſe of Offence to any, unleſs *Socinians*, *Quakers*, *Anabaptiſts*, and ſuch kind of Sects, which are not only Condemn'd by all the Reformed Churches as well as ours, but alſo judged a Scandal and Reproach to the Reformation it ſelf: You have heard too partly, of what Conſequence the right underſtanding of this Point is, but this will appear more clearly, whilſt I ſhew you,

2. That there is nothing in our Eccleſiaſtical Government which can be a juſt ground of Separation and Non-Conformity.

I will not here go about to prove that our preſent Form of Government can lay the beſt claim to Apoſtolical Inſtitution of any of thoſe that are this day any where to be found in Chriſtendom; for though I do believe this in my Conſcience my ſelf, yet I'le freely confeſs (though this be more, it may be, than ſome of better Abilities will Con me thanks for) that this Controverſie has ſo much of Obſcurity and Perplexity in it, that it is not eaſie to Convince ſuch of this, who are under any conſiderable prejudices againſt it: I'le there-

therefore proceed another way, and will ask our Brethren, Do they believe, that as in Scripture Fundamentals of Faith are plain and evident, but leſs neceſſary Opinions are not? So in the Matter of Church-Government, the Eſſentials of it are expreſly and clearly deliver'd and preſcrib'd, but not all the Circumſtantials of it? If they believe ſo, then they have not the leaſt Reaſon to deſert our Church upon the Account of its Polity; for there is nothing Eſſential to Eccleſiaſtical Government that is really wanting in ours: Has any Form a true Ordination or Dedication of Men to the Service of God in his Church? We have much more; have they thoſe who for the Edification of the Churches of Chriſt, Preach the Goſpel, Adminiſter the Sacraments? We as much, if not more: Have they any Method to preſerve the Unity of the Churches of Chriſt, and to Propagate the Faith of Chriſt? (I doubt they have not, as might be eaſily made out from their own Records, and the Hiſtories either of Presbytery or Independency; but if they have) I am ſure we have much more: One thing I muſt confeſs we have not, I cannot ſay we want it, *i. e.* Lay-Elders, a device as new as Popular; but I pray, of what uſe are theſe? They can neither Preach nor Adminiſter the Sacraments, nor is there ſure any Paſtoral Power of Diſcipline Originally in them; and as for private Inſtruction and Admonition, I am very Ignorant if St. *Paul* does not in ſeveral places make that a part of the Paſtoral Office of the Miniſter, ſure he forgot that there was ſuch a Conſtitution as that of Lay-Elders, in the Church of Chriſt; or which I rather believe he did not think any ſo fit for the diſcharge of this, as the Miniſter, being a Duty of the greateſt Importance, and the greateſt Difficulty: Have they a

Discipline to restrain or cut off Offences? So have we: That it has not been exercised with strictness, is to be imputed in the greatest part to that tenderness which our Church ever had (and I hope will in a proper measure never want) for those who have Revolted from her, let not her Moderation become her Crime, forgive her this wrong. Thus we have then in our Constitution all that any Man can Fancy to be Essentially necessary for the Government of the Church of Christ, and if the Essentials only of Government be clearly and expresly prescrib'd in Scripture, there can be no pretence for Separation founded here.

What then? Do they believe that Christ and his Apostles Instituted one Form of Church-Government expresly and clearly delivered in Scripture, not only as to Essentials, but all the Circumstantials of it? And that this Form is by the appointment of Christ of perpetual Obligation, and unalterable, absolutely necessary and Essential to the Being of a Christian Church? If they do not believe this, I would fain know why we may not Rationally allow our Governours as much Light, and Prudence, and Spiritual Assistance too in the establishment of the Circumstantials of Ecclesiastical Polity, as to a few, and those fanciful and discontented Subjects? For such a Rise most Sects amongst us have had. Why 'tis not as fit that the Subjects should comply with the Laws of their Governours, as Governours with the Weaknesses and Fancies of their Subjects? But if they do believe there is any such Form thus evidently prescrib'd in all its Circumstantials, and Essentially necessary to the Being of a Church, then pray be pleased without Prejudice, to consider what will follow from hence.

I Judge

1. Judge if the Eſtabliſhed Government has not a reaſon to be apprehenſive of the deſigns and practices of Men of this Opinion, who judge not only ours, but all other Church Governments beſides their own, Anti-Chriſtian, or which is all one, Anti-Scriptural, and utterly repugnant to the Word of God, and are ſo far from being able to ſubmit to any ſuch, that they are oblig'd in Conſcience, as they value the glory of God and the good of Souls, to endeavour the overthrow of any ſuch Government, and the Eſtabliſhment of their own, as that which Chriſt expreſly requires.

2. If they believe this, then judge you whether their Clergy are not obliged to diſabuſe and undeceive their people and to tell 'em plainly that Rites and Ceremonies are but the Pretences of Separation, that if we ſhould quit at their requeſt all theſe, it could give 'em no ſatisfaction till their Form of Government ſo expreſly requir'd by Chriſt and abſolutely neceſſary to the Being of a Church be ſet up, I am ſure, if we have thought otherwiſe 'tis very fit we ſhould be undeceiv'd and ſhould know that this is the true ſtate of the Controverſy between us and men of this Opinion, whether the Government now Eſtabliſh't ſhall continue, or whether theirs ſhall be erected on the ruins of it; and from the ſame ground tis eaſy for us to gueſs what ſort of Toleration or Comprehenſion they (if they ſhould prevail) could with a good Conſcience afford to us, how far they could with a good Conſcience connive at a Form of Church Government Anti-Chriſtian and repugnant to the Word of God.

3. All who are of this Opinion do utterly unchurch and condemn, not only ours, but all other Churches in Chriſtendom beſides their own.

And thus I think this Controverſie about the Form of Eccleſiaſtical Government is reduc'd to a very narrow compaſs; for if any man will hold that there is one only Form expreſly requir'd both in Eſſentials and Circumſtantials as abſolutely neceſſary to the Being of a Church, you ſee what Unanſwerable difficulties, and Unaccountable abſurdities and inconveniences this Opinion is clog'd with, and how Unreaſonable it were that any Eſtabliſh'd Government ſhould give any Countenance to Men of ſuch a perſwaſion; but if they believe that the Eſſentials or Fundamentals only of Church Government are plainly deliver'd, expreſly preſcrib'd, and that ſuch only are neceſſary and immutable, the Circumſtantials in each Church being left to the prudence of Men conducting themſelves by the General Rules of Scripture, then it is eaſily apparent that our Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution wants no ſuch Eſſentials and that none can be more fit to fix and determine the Circumſtantials of this Goverment then thoſe whom God has appointed Governours in this Church, this being the command of the Apoſtle, *Obey thoſe that are ſet over you in the Lord. Heb.* 13. 17. and now, I'le leave any honeſt and ſober Man to try whether he can by Fancy or Surmize, as much as gueſs at a ſhaddow of reaſon to juſtifie a ſeparation from our Church on the Account of its Government.

3. I come now to the third Thing, the only Thing remaining from whence any pretences for Separation can be rais'd, that is our Rites and Ceremonies.

I will not here enter into a particular diſcuſſion of our brethrens Arguments and Objections againſt each of our few and harmleſs Rites and Ceremonies, but I will beſeech all to conſider,

1. That

1. That there cannot as much as an *Idæa* or notion of a Church poſſibly be fram'd without ſome Rites and Ceremonies to be admitted in it.

2. That for theſe we have no particular and definitive Rule in Scripture, which is a truth that will be evident as long as there are any general Rules relating to this matter, to be found in the New Teſtament, ſuch as, *Let all things be done to edification*, 1 Cor. 14. v. 26. And, *Let all things be done decently and in order.* verſe 40. for I think it will be next to impoſſibility to find out any ſenſe or uſe in general Rules, relating to this matter, if all particulars were fix'd and determin'd accordingly.

3. As no Churches are without their Rites and Ceremonies, ſo every Church, does take upon it ſelf, to fix and determine theſe, and indeed not only thoſe of the *Ausburgh* Confeſſion, but *Calvin* and all thoſe who have followed that way of Reformation, nay *Andrew Melvil* himſelf in his Platform of Presbytery for the Church of *Scotland*, expreſly declares that it belongs to the Church to determin all matters relating to the τὰ πρέπον, or decency and order in Circumſtantials of Divine Worſhip The Aſſemblies Directory it ſelf could find no other foundation for the fixing and determining ſuch things, but humane prudence, and by this they mean no doubt on't that of the Governours of the Church; and indeed it is ſtark Nonſenſe to think otherwiſe, for if there muſt be Rites and Ceremonies, as to the Circumſtantials of Religion, and theſe be not particularly determin'd, but left to general Rules, who can in common ſenſe be thought fit to determine this matter, but the Governours in each Church. Thus far therefore I think I have advanc'd with great clearneſs, that no rational Man can find fault

fault with our Church, either that we have Rites and Ceremonies, or that they are determin'd by the Governours of the Church. All that can be therefore poſſibly fancy'd blameable, muſt be the Nature of our Ceremonies, and here tho I confeſs, my reaſon cannot comprehend why they who are impowr'd to determine the Circumſtantials of Religion, ſhould not be the fitteſt Judges of the tendency of ſuch Circumſtantials to Decency, and Order, and Edification, yet for this time I am content that neither we nor they ſhould be Judges in this matter, but we will refer our ſelves and our controverſie, to thoſe who have been the great Authors, and defenders of the Reformation. Dr. *Durell* who was eight years a Miniſter in the Reformed Church in *France* has writ a Treatiſe, concerning the Judgment and Practice of all the Reformed Churches in this point of Ceremony, wherein the conſent to, and approbation of our Church in this matter does unanimouſly appear, he could not be ſubject to Ignorance in this Controverſie, the Reader may eaſily ſee whether he were under any prejudice or no, but if any exception could lie againſt him, I would eaſily appeal to the Body and Syſtem of Confeſſions and the Liturgies of all the Reformed Churches of Chriſtendom; to be ſhort, whoever will ſearch honeſtly into this matter, will find there are two things only for which Rites and Ceremonies can be deſervedly condemn'd.

1. If they be Idolatrous or Superſtitious; or,

2. If they be Burthenſome for their number. There is manifeſtly no ground of Quarrel with our Church on this laſt Account, as to the former charge, I think we have nothing amongſt us that any Man of common ſenſe and modeſty can ſuſpect to be an Image or Idol, and how Idolatry can be ſuppos'd without Either Idol

or

or Image, is next an Impoſſibility to conceive, and as for Superſtition 'tis ſeated primarily in the mind of Man, and depends upon that opinion which is the ground and foundation of the Inſtitution, or obſervance of the Rite and Ceremony. Now what opinions particular Men may have, I know not, but if any Man can ſhew me that the Conſtitution of our Church has receiv'd into it, any opinion that has the leaſt Tincture or Reliſh of Superſtition, if it builds the Injunction or uſe of its few Ceremonies upon any other Foundation, then the general Rules of St. *Paul* that they tend to Decency, Order and Edification, I will for my part moſt readily ſubſcribe to the Abrogation or Abolition of any thing which has the face or ſhadow of a Ceremony amongſt us.

By this time it's eaſie for any unprejudic'd and ſincere Hearer to judge what grounds our Church has given our Diſſenting Brethren of a Separation, ſo fatal, not to the honour only, but I may almoſt ſay, to the Being of our Church and State too, what is it they find fault with? Is it the Doctrine of our Church? No; for this they contend with us, which of us have the greater eſteem and veneration for it, or if they ſhould differ in any one Article of our Confeſſion, I know not any Canon that does exact Oath or Subſcription to our Book of Articles, from the People, and in our Publick ſervice, they joyn with us in no other confeſſion then that of the Apoſtles Creed, together with thoſe two expoſitions of it, the *Nicene* and *Athanaſian*, univerſally reverenc'd and receiv'd. Do they find fault with the Government of our Church? I deſire that they would ſhew us what eſſential part of Church Government is wanting in ours, if they think every Circumſtantial of Church Government clearly

clearly prescrib'd in Scripture, and every such absolutely necessary to the Being of a Church, and perpetual and immutable: When I shall see this made out, I believe I shall be able to prove that our Government may lay as good a Claim to such an Institution as any other whatever, and till then I desire they would consider the notorious inconveniences, such an opinion is clog'd with, none of the least of which is this (not mention'd before) that as often as we shall find in any Church, some Circumstance or other of Government, not clearly made out to us by holy Text, so often shall we be unavoidably tempted by this Principle to make a Separation from it; and how often this is like to happen, I leave to the reason of every Man, but indifferently read in Scripture, and to the experience of all Men to Judge.

Do they lastly find fault with our Ceremonies? let them shew us that the Church has no Power of instituting any, or that ours are burthensom for their number, or such in their Nature, as necessarily involve Men in the guilt of Superstition or Idolatry, which they will be able to do, when they shew us the Idol we adore, or that Superstitious Opinion in the Confession of our Church on which such a Superstitious Rite is founded, if nothing of this kind can be prov'd, it will be found that our Brethren have been so far from Lowliness and Meekness, from Longsuffering and Forbearance, that they have broken the Peace and Unity of the Church, without any just grounds at all. And yet tho they should be able to prove some one thing or other of this kind, yet neither would this be sufficient for their separation; for tho they cannot peradventure do all we think them bound to do, yet there is much that they can do for the sake of Peace and

Unity

Unity, which till they have done, they will be found guilty of Tranſgreſſing this Rule of St. *Paul.* I come therefore,

2. Whether our Brethren of the Separation have done all which they themſelves acknowledge they Lawfully may do for preſerving *the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace?*

As much as in you lyes (ſaith St. *Paul, Heb.* 12. 14.) *follow Peace with all Men.* And in another place, *The Wiſdom which is from above is firſt Pure, then Peaceable*, James 3. 17. Theſe and ſuch like places do certainly import two things. I'le therefore Demand,

1. That it behoves every Man to do all that Lawfully he can do for the ſake of Unity and Peace.

2. That he that does otherwiſe, is not led by the Spirit of God, which is a Spirit of Peace. 'Tis therefore with great Reaſon that we expect from Men that they ſhould do all that lyes in them for the Nation's and the Churches Peace.

1. Is it not Lawful e're a Subject renounces his Obedience to Eſtabliſhed Laws, or a Chriſtian leaves the Communion of an Eſtabliſh'd Church, to Conſider, Examine, and Weigh upon what grounds he proceeds to Act thus? This I ſuppoſe is ſo far from being Unlawful, that it is abſolutely Neceſſary for every Man that will preſerve a good Conſcience. But alas! how many hundreds are there in an Actual Separation from our Church, who are ſo far from having Examined, or Weighed either the Conſtitution of our Church, which they forſake, or of that which they betake themſelves to, that they do not at this day underſtand either; and what is worſe, have never endeavoured it. How many hundreds are there in Actual Separation from us upon a pretended diſlike of our

Rites, who have never Conſidered or Examined the Nature of things indifferent, or of Chriſtian Liberty, or of the Power of every particular Church in Eſtabliſhing the Circumſtantials of Divine Worſhip: Nay, that do no more underſtand either at this day, than I do the Laws and Intereſts of the moſt Remote and unknown Kingdom upon Earth. How many hundreds are there who have left our Communion upon diſlike of Perſonal Errors and Corruptions, which our Church Condemns as much as they do, or upon Admiration of ſome Men's Perſons or Abilities, which St. *Paul* Condemns himſelf? Now, 'tis manifeſt that ſuch as theſe are ſo far from Acting upon juſt and proper Principles, that they Act upon none at all; their Diviſion from us can be imputed only to Fancy or Raſhneſs, and Inconſiderateneſs, or what is worſe: Such as theſe certainly can never be ſaid to have done all that they Lawfully can do for the ſake of Peace and Unity. Nor can ſuch a Method of proceeding be either juſtified, unleſs it can be made appear, that it is a Matter left purely to our Liberty and Choice, what Communion we will be of; which can never be till Obedience and Diſobedience, Schiſm and Unity become things indifferent.

Now, the Number of theſe is ſo great, as I believe every underſtanding Man that hears me this day, well knows, that if all theſe ſhould return to that Duty which they owe the Government and the Church, I do not queſtion but that Conventicles would be ſo thin, that there would need no Laws to diſſolve them. I think therefore, I may very reaſonably require and charge the multitude, who are raſhly, ignorantly, and inconſiderately engaged in Separation, that they return to the Unity of the Church, as they will Anſwer for all

all the diſmal Effects of our Diviſions at the Dreadful Day of Judgment.

2. I demand, whether every Man in a Difference of this Nature ought not to be of a Meek and Teachable Temper, ought not to be willing and deſirous to be Inform'd.

This I am ſure is ſo far again from being unlawful, that it is every Man's Duty; and yet I am afraid, that all who have Travelled to reduce others to a right underſtanding, have juſt Reaſon to complain, that they have found it a far more difficult Task to encounter the Paſſions and Prejudices than the Reaſons of ſuch Men. Alas, how common is it that Men deſiſt and ſhun all means and attempts of their Information! How often is it that Men are enraged and provoked, not Inſtructed or Inform'd by the moſt Convincing Truth, deliver'd with Meekneſs and Integrity! Nay, ſuch is very commonly the carriage of ſome, that it requires not only a clear Underſtanding, but approved Courage alſo in any Man who will take upon him to examine and baffle Popular Errors, though with all the ſoftneſs and gentleneſs imaginable. I am unwilling to enlarge farther, but I conjure all that hear me this day, if concern'd in the Subject I am Diſcourſing of, as they value their Souls, that they do endeavour hereafter to poſſeſs themſelves with that Meekneſs and Lowlineſs of Mind, which become all thoſe who pretend to a ſincere Love of the Truth, which become all thoſe who Love the Peace of *Sion*: For I am more than abundantly ſatisfied in my ſelf, that it is more than one half of your Information, to be willing to be Inform'd; and that 'tis not ſo much the remove of Mens Errors, as of their Paſſions and Prejudices, which is Neceſſary to the cloſing our Diviſions and Breaches.

How Reaſonable is it for me to require this Temper in all thoſe who would have us believe that they Act with a good Conſcience? Common Gratitude, and Humanity, the Love of their Countrey, and the Love of their God does indiſpenſably call for this Frame and Diſpoſition of Spirit from them: How can they ſee thoſe Stains and Reproaches with which their manifold Diviſions have ſtain'd the Beauty and Luſtre of the Church of Chriſt, without that Sorrow and Melancholy which becomes every Chriſtian that is truly Zealous for the Honour of God? How can they look upon thoſe freſh and bleeding Wounds which their Separation has given to their dear Native Countrey, without a bleeding Heart? How can they ſee that Government, under which they enjoy ſo many Bleſſings, thus torn and ſhaken, without a very ſenſible tenderneſs and affliction for it? Were they but thus Afflicted, they would be ſo far from being forward or wilful from ſhunning the means of Information through Wantonneſs or Obſtinacy, that they would refuſe no Toil, no Coſt for the ſake of it; that they would kiſs the Feet of thoſe that could bring the glad Tidings of Peace, that could offer them any Light or Inſtruction which might reſtore them at once to the Unity of the Church, and the Peace of their own Conſcience, and ſo atchieve that Bleſſed Work of removing their Scruples, and their, and our Calamities together.

Having thus in two Queſtions premiſed in general what were Reaſonable to expect from every Man in the Separation,

1. That

1. That whoever is Actually Separated without ſeriouſly weighing, or rightly underſtanding what the juſt and proper grounds of Separation are, ſhould return to the Unity of the Church.

2. That every Man ought to be poſſeſſed with ſuch a Meek, Lowly, and Teachable Temper, as may render him capable and deſirous of Information. I come now to conſider the Point a little more cloſely and particularly.

You will not hold Communion with us. Why? Becauſe there are Corruptions in our Church, though I know not what they be, I will for this time ſuppoſe ſo; Will ye then hold Communion with no Church but what is utterly free from all Corruptions and Errors? How unpracticable a Principle is this? What Inſtances can we find of Churches Conſtituted even in Apoſtolical and Primitive Times, who were utterly exempt from all Errors and Corruption? Examine the Scripture, conſider the Churches at *Jeruſalem*, at *Antioch*, at *Rome*, at *Corinth*, and all thoſe of *Aſia*, and ſee whether even in the Apoſtles times, there were not manifeſt Errors crept in? It is eaſie to judge, how inconſiſtent a Principle this is, if we conſider the unavoidable frailties of Humane Nature, from which Governours are not utterly exempt, much leſs private Men: Or if we conſider, that the Intereſts of the World do almoſt neceſſarily and unavoidably mix themſelves with the Affairs of Religion, as far as concerns Circumſtantials in Church-Government: And this I think were no hard Task for me to ſhew by a particular Survey of the Conſtitution and Government of moſt, if not all the Reformed Churches this day in Chriſtendom. Nor was this Truth ever more apparently diſcernable than in Presbytery and Independency in this King-

Kingdom, when they had the Aſſiſtance of the then prevailing ſecular Power.

2. Conſider, how Fatal as well as Impracticable a principle this is? For this pretence of ſeeking for a pure Church, void of Spot or Wrinkle, has carried Men through a Succeſſion or deſcent of Sects, and left them at laſt in the Draggs and Lees of all Sects, Quakers, Ranters and Atheiſts. That we may therefore be ſafe in the Communion of any Church, it will be ſufficient,

1. That the Errors and Corruptions in it be not ſuch as are Repugnant to the Fundamentals of Faith, the Mentials of Government, and the Rule of good Life.

2. If the Errors or Corruptions be of an inferiour Nature, it will be abundantly enough to ſecure us in the Communion of that Church, if we can Communicate with that Church, without Communicating with its Errors; without being compelled to declare our aſſent to any thing, we reckon a falſehood, or practiſing any thing that we account a Corruption. As to the

1. I think no Man at this time of day charges our Church with any Error Contradictory to Fundamentals, or deſtructive of good manners. As to the

2. Suppoſing our Errors of an inferiour Nature, let us conſider how far the People may Communicate with us, without Communicating in theſe Errors; ſuppoſe there were an Error in ſome Circumſtantials of our Government, what evil Effect can that have upon the People in our Communion? Can the Word Preached become Ineffectual, or the Sacraments of our Church Unhallowed? becauſe that Man, who Preaches the one, or Adminiſters the other, is not ordain'd by a Colledg of meer Presbyters; what if

our

our Church Diſcipline be not executed with ſtrictneſs? This may be a perſonal Error at any time in the Governours, but not in the Conſtitution of our Church; this kind of Liberty may be indeed very Miſchievous to the Vicious, but the good are both a Law and Diſcipline to themſelves. 'Tis true it may be both a trouble and offence to ſincere Chriſtians, that the Looſe and Wicked are not reſtrain'd and puniſh'd, but I cannot poſſibly ſee, how the ſin of another can Wound or Defile my Conſcience; or how a good Man becomes guilty by living in the Neighbour-hood or Family of a bad one. You know that in the twelve Diſciples there was one Devil. *John* 6. 70. That our Saviour has expreſly liken'd the Church or Kingdom of God to a Net that encloſed both the good and bad Fiſh. *Matth.* 13. 47. To a Field wherein the Wheat and the Tares grew up together, and were not to be ſeparated till the Harveſt, *i.e.* till the final Judgment, *v.* 25. I do not urge theſe places for a toleration of Looſe and Wicked Men in our Church or any other, he that thinks we have need of ſuch a defence is utterly ignorant of the Conſtitution and ſenſe of our Church: We admit indeed all ſorts to the hearing the Word, and we ſhould croſs the deſign of our Saviour if we did otherwiſe, who came to call Sinners, not the Righteous to Repentance, but we reject all from the Sacrament who can be manifeſtly convicted of any thing that does incapacitate them for it: Let any Man read our Rubrick and Canons relating to this matter beginning at the 109, and if he be not obſtinately projudic'd he will confeſs that our Church is ſo far from approving Vice or Impiety in its members, that it has taken all the care that can reaſonably be deſir'd to purge our Communion of all things that might give any

ſcandal

Scandal or Offence. So then they that diſlike the Government of our Church, may Lawfully joyn in our Aſſemblies, ſince they can Communicate in the one without Communicating at all in the Errors of the other.

Let us come now to Rites and Ceremonies. Why ſhould theſe keep People from joyning with us in our Publick Aſſemblies? I know not what Influence the Croſs in Baptiſm, or the Ring in Marriage can poſſibly have upon our hearing the Word, receiving the Sacraments, or joyning in our Publick Prayers, ſince we do not in either of theſe declare the leaſt Aſſent to, or Approbation of theſe Rites. As to the Surpliſs, I cannot poſſibly imagine what there can be in it more than in a Gown, Cloak, or Caſſock; it may not, peradventure, agree with the Fancy of every beholder, but I cannot imagine why it ſhould diſturb any Man's Conſcience, unleſs the wearers.

There is but one thing, if you call it a Rite or Ceremony, in which they that joyn with us in a thorow-Communion, are expected to Conform, which is Kneeling in the Receiving the Sacrament: A Poſture ſo Natural and Suitable, that I have Obſerved, that thoſe whom I have ſeen Receive with many Tears, and much Devotion, do ſeem to think it ſcarce low enough, and are more Naturally inclin'd to bow down, or fall flat upon the Earth, than to ſtand or ſit. And indeed when we conſider what the Motions of the Soul of a Devout Communicant are, that it is humbled under its Reflections upon its many and great Sins, that it is ſwallowed up with the ſenſe of Gods Love in Chriſt, that it is Offering up, and Devoting it ſelf to God, and does earneſtly implore his Aid and Aſſiſtance for the time to come with a Holy Fear and Reverence: What

Poſture

Poſture can more properly become a Man, performing ſo many Acts of Divine Worſhip, than Kneeling? And he that can fancy that theſe great Acts of Religious Worſhip will be rejected by God, becauſe performed by a Devout Communicant upon his Knees, and not ſitting, muſt entertain a more Blind and Superſtitious Notion of God, than ever *Jew* or *Gentile* had.

And that this Circumſtantial might not be miſtaken, our Church has explain'd it ſelf concerning this Injunction at the end of the Communion-Service, declaring expreſly that they do not hereby deſign any Reverence or Worſhip to the Elements of Bread and Wine: And I dare ſay, if you ſhould ask any one Communicant of our Church, whether they did intend any ſuch thing? They would eaſily tell you, that it is the fartheſt thing in the World from their thoughts. And to be ſhort, I do not queſtion, but that if this were all that kept Men from our Communion, the Moderation and Goodneſs of our Church would have found long ago an eaſie Expedient to heal this Difference.

The ſum of all, is this: If Men may joyn with us in our Communion without being guilty of any thing they ſcruple in it, ſo far I think every Man that Labours after Peace, is bound to joyn; for it cannot be otherwiſe conceived how ſuch can be ſaid to do their utmoſt for the ſake of Unity and Peace, ſince they leave much undone, which they Lawfully may do But you will ſay, Would not our Communion in the Publick Congregation Countenance all thoſe things we ſcruple? I Anſwer, No: For no Man in any Communion is anſwerable for any thing more, or thought to approve any thing elſe than what that Church requires of him as the Condition of Communion. This is

apparently the ſenſe of our Church; for if they thought that the joyning in Publick Communion did neceſſarily imply an Approbation of every particular in its Frame and Conſtitution, I cannot ſee any Neceſſity of Obliging the Clergy to Subſcription or expreſs Declaration of Aſſent and Conſent, *&c.* And accordingly,

This has been the Practice of Chriſtians in all Ages. *Polycarp* and *Anicetus* did joyn together in Communion, though they could not agree together in the Controverſie about Eaſter. The *Catholicks* and *Novatians* did joyn together to Oppoſe the *Arrians*, and yet they were not hereby ſuppoſed to agree together in the Doctrines of *Novatus*. And in a Synod at *Sandomiria*, ſeveral Proteſtant Churches very much differing in their Forms, and Rites, and Ceremonies, did yet unanimouſly agree to joyn together in one Communion, as often as they ſhould be Conven'd together. The Reſult of all this Argument is therefore plainly this: That whatever Errors of leſs moment may be in a Church, no Man becomes guilty of them by being of that Communion, unleſs they be ſuch as he is bound to Profeſs or Practiſe e're he can be admitted into, or continue in that Communion. The Conſequence of which, is this, that our Brethren are bound to joyn with us in all thoſe parts of Communion, wherein there are none of thoſe Ceremonies which they ſcruple at: And if they would but thus go as far as they can, we ſhould have good Reaſon to hope that they might be by degrees won over to an entire Conformity, or that the Government would Naturally be kind and gentle to Men of ſuch a Chriſtian and Peaceable Behaviour: If we could but obtain from them that they would frequent that part of the Publick Service

which

which begins when our Liturgy is ended; if they would but come to our Sermons without Prejudice, and with a ſincere deſire of knowing the Truth, we ſhould have no Reaſon to deſpair either of Peace or Uniformity. This I have ſaid upon a ſuppoſal that ſome Men do really ſtumble at ſome things amongſt us. But what ſhall I ſay to another ſort of Men, who do, when Occaſion requires, joyn with us in all parts of our Publick Communion, and yet cannot be perſwaded to hold a conſtant Communion with us?

What they think they Lawfully may do, is eaſy to be gueſſed by what they Actually do; when they ſee it neceſſary they can Lawfully joyn with us in all parts of our Communion, and I do not find that the beſt of their Clergy have condemn'd this Practice, and therefore I am in Charity bound to think that, that they do, they do with a good Conſcience. If ſo: It will puzzle any Man of an upright heart and moderate Capacity to Comprehend how Communion with, and and Separation from our Church (both Church and Perſons continuing ſtill the ſame) can conſiſt with a good Conſcience. I believe moſt Divines abroad do think this very little ſhort of a Contradiction: and when they hear that there are Men, who ſometimes plead Conſcience for Diſobedience to that Law, which at other times they can with a good Conſcience Comply with, they will be apt to think that there is more of Humour and Deſign in this than Conſcience. In this caſe I would ask,

1. What is it which makes our Communion in it ſelf and to them Lawful for this day, and if needs be this year, become for ever after Unlawful? all that can be ſaid is, that there are ſome accidental alterations in this caſe, that there are ſome Conveniencies or

Inconveniencies which renders our Communion to day Lawful, and this time Twelvemonth Unlawful: Theſe muſt not be outward or temporal, for theſe cannot vary the Nature of Church Communion, unleſs a Man will vily proſtitute his Conſcience; it remains therefore, that there muſt be ſome inward and Spiritual inconveniency that makes conſtant Communion Unlawful, what this can be beſides that pretence of Better Edification, cannot I think, be as much as fancied. And then Obſerve,

1. Into what a narrow point our Controverſy is Reduced, mark how all the pretences for ſeparation are vaniſhed: Our Church Government, the Doctrine, the Liturgy, the Rites and Ceremonies are all acknowledged by them Lawful, for I deſire to know, do they by this occaſional Communion with us declare their Approbation of all theſe particulars in our Church? If they do not, then it is apparent that they do not Judge themſelves involv'd in the guilt of any thing they diſlike in our Church by Communicating with us, and conſequently they do publickly own that nothing they find fault with in it can be a juſt ground for Separation; if they do, then it is apparent that all controverſies about any thing of this kind are at an end, and muſt ever be ſo. For all theſe which they approve in their Occaſional Communion will be no other, if they hold conſtant Communion with us. All therefore that is left for juſtification of theſe dreadful Diviſions is only pretence of better Edification.

2. Obſerve, that this pretence will at any time ſerve the turn to juſtifie a Separation, not only from ours, but from any Church in Chriſtendom, and can never be admitted to be of any Weight or Force, till

it

it be made appear that Unity or Schiſm, Obedience or Diſobedience are things indifferent, and that it is not a pin matter, whether a Man be of the Eſtabliſh'd Church, or Presbyterian, or Independent, or Anabaptiſt, or Socinian, or Quaker, for this pretence of better Edification, conſidering the different Diſpoſitions of People, and the different Abilities of the Miniſters will be laid claim to with as much heat by each of them as by any of the reſt.

3. Obſerve that though this may have ſomething of a face of a Plea for the Communion of one Day, yet it has none for the Communion of a Year; for to Live deſtitute of the Publick means of Edification for a Year together, ſeems to be a kind of Complyance not over-Chriſtian, nor very ſafe. But if in this time they hold Communion with both Churches without prejudice to Edification, I cannot poſſibly conceive why they ſhould at any time afterwards break off their Communion with us, ſince the leaſt they are bound to do for the ſake of Unity and Peace, is certainly what they find by Experience they can do, not only Lawfully, but without any Prejudice to their Souls. Thus empty is this Pretence, if true; but what if it be not true? It were very ſtrange if all the Preachers of diſtinct and ſeparate Congregations ſhould be Edifying Men, and none of ours ſo: Bleſſed be God, we may ſay it without Vanity, that we can behold in our Church as manifeſt Proofs of the Power of God in his Ordinances, as in any other whatſoever; thoſe of our Church who give a Regular and Conſcientious Attendance to the Word, the Prayers, and Sacraments of the Church, being generally as Eminent Examples of Subſtantial Goodneſs and Religion truly Chriſtian, as are any where to be found. Nor indeed can any

Reaſon

reaſon be Imagined, why the Spirit of God ſhould be judged to have forſaken our Aſſemblies, ſince we Preach the ſame Goſpel, Preſs the ſame Truths, Adminiſter the ſame Sacraments, and Offer up the ſame Petitions and Praiſes to God, and that I hope with integrity of Heart, to which Chriſt has promiſed the Aids and Aſſiſtances of his Spirit. And therefore 'tis to be fear'd that the Edification which cannot be promoted from ſuch a Communion is not derived from the Spirit and Goſpel of Chriſt, but depends upon ſome perſonal abilities, acquired forms, or the Inventions and Paſſions of Men.

2. I deſire to know, if they cannot Communicate with us conſtantly, why do they not as frequent as they can? And how ſhall we be able to determine, how frequent this their Occaſional Communion may be? Or what limits they will in this point preſcribe to the frequency of their Occaſional Communion.

3. Since they can hold Communion with us on Occaſion, I would beg them to declare, what the Kind and Nature of theſe Occaſions are which juſtifie this Communion. For then I ſhould not queſtion but I ſhould be able to ſhew that theſe Occaſions or ſome as Urgent and Weighty, do ſo frequently occur, that if they would Act conſonant to this their Principle, they would ſoon turn their Occaſional into a conſtant Communion. Mark what I ſay, I would fain know what thoſe Occaſions are that do juſtifie Occaſional Communion with us: and if I do not prove as Neceſſary, nay more Important Occaſions always ſtanding and in Force, I'le be content to be of their Communion. The Thread of my Diſcourſe doth now Naturally lead me to inquire,

3. Whether

3. Whether our Brethren have obſerved this Rule of St. *Paul* in forming, propagating and defending their Separation, upon ſuppoſal that the grounds of it were both juſt and neceſſary? But being well aſſured that an Hiſtorical accompt of the Riſe and Progreſs of Separation amongſt us would look like an Invective. I have upon ſecond thoughts purpoſely declin'd it, being unwilling to Exaſperate thoſe minds which I travail only to inform.

From this diſcourſe it appears, what our brethren may do for peace: How far they may go (if they pleaſe) towards the healing of thoſe wounds which endanger both our Church and State. If they pleaſe, Bleſſed God! How can it but pleaſe Chriſtians to reſtore as much as lies in them Unity to thy Church, and Peace to that Government under which thou haſt placed them? How can Diſſentions, Diſtractions, Ruins pleaſe any ſoul that is inſpir'd by thy meek, peaceful and gentle Spirit? O my brethren, will ye call your ſelves Chriſtians, whoſe Livery or Diſtinguiſhing Character is Love? And will ye do nothing for peace and Unity? If you are the Diſciples of Chriſt you ought to Sacrifice your Eſtates, your Worldly reputations, nay your lives themſelves, all but a good Conſcience for Unity and Peace; O be but Content to Sacrifice your humours for it! O be but perſuaded to do what you can for Peace without any prejudice to your Credit or Fortune or Conſcience, nay with infinite advantages to Each! What would you have us do, when you your ſelves are thus wanting to your ſelves? We deſire, we travail, we pray for your Peace, and as becomes brethren, we ſuffer in your afflictions when ever you force it upon your ſelves: 'Tis our grief and troubles when ever we are obliged to be the Inſtruments

ments of any thing that cauſes yours: but what would you have us do? How unreaſonable were it for you to expect (and impoſſible for us to comply with ſuch an expectation) that we ſhould break the Laws, falſify our truſt, and deſert that Duty we owe to God and Man, in compliance to your fancies! When you your ſelves in the mean time refuſe to do, what 'tis manifeſtly apparent you Lawfully may do in compliance with the Laws, and for the ſake of Peace and Unity in Church and State.

And now I muſt call God and my own Conſcience to witneſs, that I have diſcharged my ſelf with all imaginable Integrity, I lie not under any Provocations on one hand, or Obligation on the other, which might pervert my Judgment, and in this condition you will eaſily judge me exempt from the Temptation of Intereſt or Ambition; I have delivered the truth with plainneſs, and I have watched over my ſelf that I might not mix any frailties with it which might render it Diſtaſtful, tho I think the Charity which (I am not aſhamed to own) I have for my miſtaken Brethren, would of it ſelf have kept me eaſily from any bitterneſs or ſharp reflections. I Pray God thoſe that are concern'd may lay to Heart theſe truths with the ſame Calmneſs and Integrity, I have delivered them; I ſhould not then queſtion, but that they would contribute ſomething to our Peace and Unity, which is the Earneſt Prayer and Deſire of my Soul, and ſhall be the Travail of my Life. Now to God be Glory and Honour and Dominion for Ever, *Amen.*

When

When I had proceeded thus far in the two preceding diſcourſes, I was obliged by the Approach of the *Chriſtmas* Solemnity to quit this ſubject; and indeed I could not conceive it neceſſary for me to ſpend much time on the Conſideration of this Rule of St. *Paul* with reſpect to the Government which was the ſecond general propoſed; ſince, if what I have ſaid before was clear and convictive as I hoped it was, nothing could better juſtifie the preſent procedure of the Government: For if this Separation be utterly groundleſs, the Government cannot reaſonably be taxed for endeavouring the ſuppreſſing of it by legal methods.

As to the Method of Excommunication, there is nothing in it which may not appear conſonant to the Light of Nature, as well as Scripture, nothing being more reaſonable than to exclude thoſe Men from the advantages of our Society whoſe principles and actions are repugnant not only to the proſperity but the very Being of this Society. As to thoſe Civil Effects which in our Law attend Excommunication, they are no other than what may be ſufficiently warranted by the Judgment and Practice of thoſe Churches to which our brethren have declared themſelves much devoted. So then there is nothing in this point of our Church diſcipline blameable in its Conſtitution, and I do not queſtion but that the Execution of it will be carried on with that temper which is almoſt peculiar to the Church of *England*, and ſhews it as remote from the Spirit of Perſecution as from that of Diſloyalty; a temper of which they themſelves who moſt accuſe her are the moſt pregnant proof, the Numbers and Wealth of thoſe of the Separation to which I muſt take leave to add their Confidence, be-

ing the moſt undeniable argument of the Indulgence, and Kindneſs of that Government under which they have grown up to this height.

It remains only that I put you in mind here of practiſing this Rule of St. *Paul* in your private Converſation. And

1. Give me leave to direct you who are of our own Communion; that nothing do's better become a Diſciple of Chriſt, than Charity, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering towards our Diſſenting brethren. In this ſort of behaviour we ſhall be ſure that we ſhall not gratifie our Carnal paſſions, we ſhall be moſt likely to win upon our brethren, and we ſhall advance the Credit and Reputation of our Church, nothing being a clearer proof of the Spirit of God in it, than Meekneſs and Charity in the Members of it.

Let us therefore lay aſide all Striſe and Bitterneſs and Reproach in our Converſation, nay what is more, let us not ſuffer our ſelves to be provoked or affronted into any Word or Action towards our brethren that may misbecome kind Neighbours or good Chriſtians.

But yet one thing I muſt put you in mind of, that we muſt ſo preſerve our Chriſtian Charity, as alſo to preſerve that which do's neceſſarily become every good Chriſtian, our Loyalty: Our Meekneſs and Lowlineſs muſt not betray us into any thing that is undutiful or unjuſt towards that Government we live happily under; we muſt at the ſame time be Zealous for this, whilſt we are Charitable and long ſuffering towards them.

Give

Give me leave in the ſecond place to mind you who are not of our Communion, that as nothing can better become thoſe who pretend to a greater Purity in your Conſtitution, than a more eminent degree of Meekneſs and Lowlineſs, ſo nothing can ſo clear the Sincerity of your intentions, as the gentleneſs and peaceableneſs of your whole Converſation. This alone can convince the World that you act out of Conſcience, and whatſoever you ſhall be guilty of Contrary to this, will raiſe in all Men a juſt ſuſpicion that you are acted by carnal Principles and moved by worldly Ends: Nothing but this can poſſibly preſerve the Unity of Affection in the midſt of ſo many Diviſions and Subdiviſions (if this can do it.) And nothing leſs than this Unity can preſerve us from being a Prey to the Worſt of Enemies we can dread.

FINIS.

ERRATA,

PAge 6. line 8. for would r. ſhould. p. 8. l. 33. after perplexity in it, add (rais'd by the fancies and diſputes of Men who have been induſtrious in Entangling received truths.) p. 14. l. 17. for the r. their. p. 17. l. 3. after therefore add to conſider. p. 17. l. 12. blot out I demand therefore, and inſert it after Peace. l. 19. p. 18. l. 19. for either r. ever. p. 19. l. 13. for deſiſt r. reſiſt. p. 20. l. 17. for afflicted r. affected, l. 18. for forward r. froward, p. 22. l. 7. for draggs r. dreggs. p. 23. l. 30. for projudic'd r. prejudic'd p. 30. l. 26. for this their principle r. their own principle.